

## **Calais Roads Advisory Committee Meeting**

Thursday, Oct 3, 2013

Calais Town Office 8:00 pm to 9:31 pm

Committee members present (clockwise around the table from the Chair): J.C. Myers (Chair), Doug Lilley, Craig Line (arrived 8:30), Peter Harvey, Barbara Weedon, Stephanie Kaplan, and Conrad Smith.

Absent: Trey Martin.

Also attending: Scott Bassage, James Davin, Bessie Benjamin, and Geraldine Gilman.

[8:00 PM][2 minutes] - Call to order, decide whether to accept minutes for 9/12/13 meeting

- Minutes of 9/12/13 were approved as amended 5-0

[8:02 PM][27 minutes] -Public input from any attending non-CRAC members of the community.

- (8:02) James Davin comments to the Committee
  - “I like Calais Roads just fine. I’ve lived in the other place...This is better.”
  - About lower Balentine Rd:
    - I live near the Woodbury border.
    - “I think the work there is aesthetically displeasing. It doesn’t match up with the rest of Calais. ...the side of the hill is falling into this grass mat. My children call it the full diaper...there is stonework [large stone lined ditches], [that] to me makes the road much less safe. We drive that road a lot.”
    - “We are able to accept it because it is an important part of preserving our environment...It [Balentine Rd] was visibly washing silt into the Kingsbury Branch...It’s also not the whole road.”
    - “I share that example with you, not to complain about it...but to indicate that that could be the future in Calais. My message here tonight is – We like the roads of Calais just fine, for so many reasons related to the way they reduce speed, the way they are absolutely pleasant to live in, and the way frankly they curtail development.”
    - “I was reading in the [Hardwick] Gazette yesterday...I heard that there was no public attendee at the last meeting...and so I thought you deserved to hear some input. You can ask why people are reluctant to come and give input; and that may be that an excavator, a grader, or a dump truck can be a powerful policy weapon if not properly regulated. We’ve had examples of that around town before.”

- “The work of this Committee has come to be called the Adamant Issue... I just want to make it very clear that to me...this is a town wide issue...as a symptom of the way that our town works.”
  - “The article [in the Hardwick Gazette] said this was the most contentious issue in 25 years in the town... It seems like of late, various parts of our town and local government somehow get themselves wrapped around these issues that often have internal causes rather than reflecting any real public concerns. I’d just like to say that’s not a sign of a road issue. That’s a sign of bad government...There is an old Vermont saying: The town only does two things, the schools and the roads...the roads, which we seem to have mastered over the past 200 or 300 years. We seem to be struggling about that in some way...I hope you sense the heartfelt determination. Thank you very much.”
- [8:11] Gerry Gilman comments to the Committee
  - I live on Sand Hill Rd.
  - “When I first heard about this I didn’t pay too much attention. Then I got to talking with Bessie. And I heard it on the radio this morning, WDEV, and the guy that publishes the Hardwick Gazette.”
  - Gerry asked the Committee - “If you would just give me a little background of what you are looking for? What’s wrong with the Roads in Calais?” [J.C. reviewed the creation of the two Roads Committees. “What we are working on here is not to make a determination that Calais roads are bad or Calais roads are good, but rather to say, how is the Calais Road Department run as a business and what would people of Calais want for their roads?”]
  - “We came back here in 1969... I’m happy with the roads just the way they are. Some roads are a little bit too narrow to satisfy me, but there is nothing we can do because you’ve got a 40 ft bank here and a hill here and the woods. You can’t expand the roads.
  - I’m happy with the road people that work on the roads, what they are doing now. I’ve had my problems with Sand Hill Rd and it’s finally been corrected as best as it can be. You can’t do any more; it’s such a steep road that I was complaining [about] all of the road was being washed down on my land, over the right-of-way...
  - “Well I got kind of aggravated. So I went to a Selectboard meeting. You know what they said? I even had pictures showing all this. That was 3 or 4 years ago. Well they ended up leaving it in the hands of me and Alfie, the Road Commissioner. Well, that wasn’t the right thing to do. But that’s what happened... Last November he called me up and said ‘we’re going to dig a ditch and we’re going to riffraff it with rock and see how that works and clean out the culvert because the culvert always gets plugged up because the road washed down and

plugged the culvert...and now its plugged every year with silt and sand because it's still washing...They made a big mess where the culvert goes out into my meadow...I got this big ugly patch where the water can go through and it keeps building silt and silt. Sooner or later you're not going to be able to use that land for anything. But I know that is my problem because I don't want it on my lawn. "I'm very happy with the way they are doing things. I mean they're doing the best they can do. I'm not happy with the ditch, but that was my opinion that it would take care of the problem... So generally I approve of all the roads in the Town of Calais..."

Conrad responded - "One the things we are trying to do is to make it so that not so much silt is going down those ditches... We may be thinking that there are other ways to do some of the roads than the way that has been done recently.

James Davin - "One of the strategies I like is the guys are getting really good with the grader. They use it like a scalpel...And I think they are experimenting. They do these little turnoffs for the water. I think that's a great idea. That's almost zero impact on the aesthetics, on the road or the right-of-way...They haven't taken down any trees so far with the grader and it seems to drain the water off.

Stephanie responded - "That's one of the things we are looking at. We're looking at possible alternatives to the kinds of big ditches that were done on Balentine Rd. Are there other ways of protecting water quality?"

James Davin - "I'd rather have a skilled road crew that knows how to do these surgical things than be following some standard somewhere made out in space."

Conrad - "We are trying to set our own standards and not necessarily adopt the state ones that say dig these big ditches."

[8:23] Bessie Benjamin comments to the Committee

- "I live on Jack Hill Rd. I've been there since 1954."
- "I'm quite satisfied with what they are doing. You ought to see what I put up with when I first lived there."
- "This Road Commissioner, all I've got to do is get on the phone...bring something to his attention...He's done very good."
- "Are all the roads of Calais being built up higher and higher as time goes on, because we didn't used to have that ditch 10 ft down?" "I have a picture of my kids sitting on the edge of my lawn with their feet dangling down in the road. Now we have to walk up into the road." "They didn't really raise it. It [silt and gravel] just washed in there."

- “I didn’t have a road...No [school] buses came there because they couldn’t go on that road... I’m here mostly because I feel the roads are so improved over what they used to be that people ought to shut up and be satisfied.”

[8:28 pm][9 minutes] -Discussion of Town Boards Dinner. Reports from CRAC members who have attended SB meetings and/or other pertinent meetings.

- Stephanie reported on attending Selectboard meetings
  - Sherriff Sam Hill
    - He said that Lightening Ridge Rd is the worst road for speeding violations
    - In general speeds are up everywhere
    - Speed limit signs are helpful to remind people of the speed limit [there should be a speed limit sign at every intersection, [as you start driving after every intersection]
  - People asked the Selectboard about the new Road Crew job descriptions, particularly that of Operations Manager.
  - One person complained about Adamant Rd being dangerous. Nobody asked her what it is that is dangerous.
  - Cy Lamberton told the Selectboard that when he was on the Selectboard he stopped by the Town Garage every few days and took care of any problems
  - Mike Garand [East Montpelier Road Commissioner] said he hadn’t seen a Selectman in the East Montpelier Town Garage in 25 years. But, Stephanie added, they have a Town Administrator. There is a different system.
  - The Selectboard explained how the Road Committee came about. Denise said that they asked for volunteers. They were particularly looking for people who had different points of view. Everyone who volunteered is on the Road Committee.

[8:37 PM][45 minutes] - Reports from individual committees and feedback from whole group on progress.

- [8:39] Inventory Committee – Conrad & Barbara [2 pages]
  - New “Permanent Aspects” and Current Conditions” sheets
  - Conrad asked for volunteers to help inventory roads
  - They have done a few roads to date
- [8:50] Management System – J. C. [4 pages]
  - As we track projects we will develop a data base that we can use to project materials, costs, time, work plan projections, etc
  - Discussion about how GPS tracking on Town trucks can be used to collect data for:
    - Tracking and supervision of vehicles and workers
    - Tracking [position, time, & costs] road maintenance, repairs, and rebuilds [exactly where gravel was put from point to point]

- [9:16] Town Road and Bridge Standards [9/12/13 version (f)] – Conrad
  - Conrad, Stephanie, & Peter are meeting with Kari Dolan [Dept of Environmental Conservation] and Alec Portalupi [VTrans], tomorrow for their comments.
  - Show it to Mike Garand for his comments
  - Trey identified support in the Town Plan; Stephanie will forward that to all the members of the Road Committee

[9:23 PM][7 minutes] - Further discussion of format for final report from Committee: - Discussion of four (originally five) topics – what are we missing? What needs a lot more work? What is getting close to done (if any)? Set target date for CRAC task completion. Will (should) CRAC continue past this assigned task?

- We ought to give the Selectboard each part as it gets done.
  - Review the Selectboard Charge
  - The Selectboard needs the Town Road and Bridge Standards first, mid-November goal
  - J.C. recommended one more meeting in Oct, and two meetings in November to move forward quickly
- Schedule next meeting, next steps related to topics and adjourn.
- Next meeting: Tuesday, Oct. 22, 8 PM, at the Town Office

[9:30 PM][2 minutes] -Other business.

- Open Meeting Law question – Citing the question that was raised at the last CESB meeting, Peter asked where is the line between sending out information and discussion in emails between Committee members. What can we be doing in emails and what should we not be doing by email? Stephanie reminded us that is the opening topic at the Joint Meeting of Boards/Commissions/Committees/Appointees on Monday, Oct. 7, is Public Meeting Law with Garrett Baxter, Esq, VLCT as the opening speaker. That would be a good place to ask that question.

9:31 PM Adjourned

Submitted by Peter Harvey, Secretary  
Approved Dec 5, 2013